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THE VIZIER AND THE WOODMAN.

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THE GREAT BEAR'S STORY.

THE VIZIER AND THE WOODMAN.



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B



INTRODUCTION.

Bearwood, June, 1840.

DEAR FRIEND,

A few days after you
Last call'd, as I was strolling through
Our pleasant wood, upon the ground
An old and curious book I found.

'Twas in a cool, and grassy glade,
Where, I could fancy, 'neath the shade
Of hanging boughs from noon-tide heat,
A reading person might retreat,
Hoping in such a place to be
From interruption wholly free.
If such the case, my coming nigh,
No doubt had caused him thence to fly—

For, I confess, my outward bearing
To strangers might be rather scaring—
But whether it was so or not,
I sat me down upon the spot,
And with my spectacles on nose
Read through the tale I here enclose ;
A goodly tale of former days,
Which speaks of animals in praise,

And gives to us a higher station
Than most allow the brute creation.
Then down again I laid the book,
That should the owner for it look
When I was gone, he might declare
At least I was an honest bear.

Since then I have employ'd my time
In turning it from prose to rhyme,

Conceiving that in such way drest
'Twould please your little friends the best.—
Call it not dogg'rel, though it be
For sure it's bearable from me.—
Should but the tale their minds amuse,
As they its every page peruse,
And after draw from it, when ended,
The Moral true I have appended ;

They may some small advantage gain,
And I shall not have rhymed in vain.

A thousand hugs to them and you
Both from myself and brothers two
I send, and, hoping well you are,
Remain,

Your's faithfully,

the BEAR.





THE VIZIER AND THE WOODMAN.

Some hundred years since, in a far eastern land,
A good and wise Emperor reign'd,
He feasted his nobles, a gay gallant band,
And gave to the poor with a liberal hand ;
Thus love from his people he gain'd.

It chanced, as he rode by a forest one morn,
He met on the way a poor man,
Whose frame was almost to a skeleton worn,
The clothes on his back were all tatter'd and torn,
And hollow his cheeks were, and wan.

Touch'd with pity the Emp'ror stopp'd him, and said,
“ Why thus friend, and whence do you come ?”
He answer'd him, “ Sire, in your land I was bred,
“ And have better days known, but now in their stead
“ I starve, without friends or a home.”

Quoth the Emperor then, “ I your fortune would make

“ If in you I thought I might trust.”

“ Sire,” the poor man rejoin’d, “ I pray you to take

“ My life, if your service I ever forsake,

“ And prove not both faithful and just.”

Well pleased with the manner in which he replied,

Him his Vizier the Emperor made ;

But raised to high rank, and his rags thrown aside,

The poor he oppress’d, and much insolent pride

To his equals and betters display’d.

One day, as this Vizier the forest rode through,
He order'd the foresters all,
To dig many deep pits, and over them strew
Some sweet smelling herbs, so that hidden from view
The wild beasts might into them fall.

A little time after he rode forth again
These pits in the forest to see,
And thought, as he rode, " I am rich and maintain,
" As Vizier, command over all this domain ;
" Then what man is equal to me ?"





Thus dreaming he dash'd the spurs into his horse,
Who plunging and kicking, soon threw
Him off into one of these pits with such force,
That, deprived of his senses, he lay like a corse,
It might be an hour or two.

But when he recover'd himself and look'd round,
He saw to his utter dismay,
He was penn'd in as close, as an ass in the pound,
In a pit, which was twenty feet deep in the ground,
With no chance of getting away.

In the midst of his troubles a Lion drew near,
And missing his feet, in he roll'd,
Then tumbling down after an Ape did appear,
And lastly a serpent,—which made him with fear
To shake, and his blood to run cold.

The Lion made many attempts to spring out,
And so too the Ape, but in vain—
The Serpent he crept and he crawl'd round about,
While the trembling Vizier expected, no doubt,
For their evening meal to be slain.





Exhausted, the Lion laid down and look'd grim,
The Serpent rear'd fiercely his head,
But the Ape, with grimaces and all kinds of whim,
For mischief, his nature, was still strong in him,
Tormented the Vizier, half dead.

A Woodman there lived near the city, which stood
Not far from the forest, who led
An ass to its glades every day to fetch wood,
Which he afterwards sold for as much as he cou'd,
To purchase his family bread.

Now just at this moment the woodman came nigh,

In picking up wood, to the pit,

When the Vizier, who heard him, began thus to cry,

“ Come hither and help me, good fellow, and I

“ Will amply reward you for it.”

Upon hearing these words the Woodman look'd round

Expecting the speaker to see,

But no creature near, save his donkey, he found :

Then wond'ring from whence could have issued the sound,

He answer'd, “ Who calleth on me ?”





“ The Vizier I am, and have fallen by chance

“ Down this pit, where a Lion, an Ape,

“ And Serpent are too, my ill luck to enhance,

“ For with hungry looks they each eye me askance,

“ So help me I pray to escape :

“ Which soon may be done, if a rope you procure

“ And with it from hence draw me out.”

“ That’s true,” said the Woodman, “ but I am so poor,

“ My wife and my children must hunger endure,

“ If now I leave what I’m about.”

“ By the Emperor’s beard, my good friend, I declare,
 “ You shall not again know distress,
“ If out of this place you will get me to where
“ You’re standing yourself, for I promise to share
 “ With you all the wealth I possess.”

Then off ran the Woodman as fast as he might,
 And shortly return’d rope in hand,
And letting it down, to the Vizier’s delight,
He cried, “ Round your middle now fasten it tight,
 “ And soon by my side you shall stand.”





The Lion sprang up when he saw the rope drop,
And in his paws catching it straight,
Instead of the Vizier, who still had to stop,
He was by the Woodman drawn up to the top,
Whom he thank'd with a lion-like state.

He bow'd his huge head several times as he pass'd
Him into the forest. Then he
(The Woodman I mean) the rope down again cast,
Which the Ape quickly seizing, and holding it fast,
Was next to the Lion set free.

His thanks the Ape paid with a bowing grimace,
And into the wood skipp'd away—
On the rope being let down again to that place,
The Serpent about it his body did lace,
For there he'd no fancy to stay.

And being pull'd up, in a way of his own,
Though what the way was I don't know,
He show'd himself grateful ;—and, now left alone,
The Vizier laid hold of the rope that was thrown
Once more for his use down below,





And forthwith began by its aid to ascend
To the top, which he reach'd with delight,
Then thanking the Woodman, he said, " My good friend,
" To-morrow if you'll at the palace attend,
" Your kindness I'll richly requite."

My wife, thought the Woodman, as homeward he bent
His footsteps, at this will be glad—
But seeing her husband return as he went,
Without any wood and their money all spent,
She felt disappointed and sad.

He smiled at her grave looks, and said, “ Wife, when told

“ What I by this day’s work have made,

“ Your sadness will vanish, for know as much gold,

“ As either your pocket or apron can hold,

“ To-morrow I am to be paid.

“ For as through the forest I pass’d on my way,

“ I luckily happen’d to save

“ The life of the Emperor’s Vizier to-day,

“ Who half he possesses has promised to pay

“ To me, for the help that I gave.”

At hearing kind fortune had play'd them this freak,
His wife was delighted indeed,
And said, whilst a happy smile dimpled her cheek,
“ Come let us be merry to-night, and you'll seek
“ To-morrow, as promised, your meed.”

Accordingly off to the palace he hied
Next morning and knock'd at the gate,
When forth came the porter to see who outside
Was knocking, and when he the Woodman espied,
He ask'd him his business to state.

“ I’ve come, by his order, the Vizier to see,”

He answer’d, “ as soon will appear,

“ If you, Sir, will only but good enough be

“ To tell him, the poor man that yesterday he

“ Spoke to in the forest is here.”

The Vizier he sought at the Woodman’s request,

And gave him the message he bore,

Who, when he had heard it, did vow and protest

He knew nothing of him, and that he had best

Be off, nor come there any more.



On the Porter's return, at the answer he brought

The Woodman was heavy at heart.

Poor fellow ! when he in his honesty sought

The Vizier, he ne'er for a moment had thought

He could from his promise depart.

His hopes all cast down, in a sorrowful state

To his wife he return'd, and the whole

Of the Vizier's behaviour did to her relate ;

When she, like a kind and a cheerful helpmate,

Endeavour'd his grief to console.

“ Come cheer up,” she said, “ and some other day try

“ Your luck with the Vizier, who may

“ Ere this have regretted the hasty reply,

“ He sent you this morning, nor longer deny

“ To you what he promised to pay.”

He took her advice and proceeded unto

The palace soon after again,

And pray'd of the Porter his errand to do ;

The Porter consented, but said to him, “ You

“ Will find that I do it in vain.





“ However your wishes I will to him state,
 “ Though for you his anger I dread.”
And truly the Vizier when told, in a great
And furious passion, rush’d forth to the gate,
 And beat him till he was near dead.

His wife brought the ass, when she heard his sad plight
 From being so cruelly beat,
To carry him home, and through many a night
She nursed him until she’d recover’d him quite,
 And set him once more on his feet.

He call'd, in his gratitude, down on her head,
Each blessing which mortal can mention—
Since by her exertions they all had been fed,
Yet every night, as we've seen, by his bed
She watch'd with unwearied attention.

Restored now in health to the forest he went,
As had been his habit before,
And work'd very hard till the day-light was spent,
When homeward he turn'd, with his fortune content,
And thought of the Vizier no more.

It fell on a time, that in raising his eyes,
While loading his donkey with wood,
A Lion he saw, to his fear and surprise,
Who ten camels laden with much merchandise
Was driving to where he then stood.

So leading his ass he moved off from that ground
Towards home, but they after him came
Until close up to him, when he looking round
Felt perfectly safe, for the Lion he found
With that of the pit was the same.

The Lion he nodded, and follow'd the line
Of road, which led presently to
The house of the Woodman, then making a sign,
As much as to say "all these camels are thine,"
He gave him his paw and withdrew.

The Woodman the camels began to unload
To see the contents of the bales,
And opening one was amazed, for it show'd,
That many rich articles in it were stow'd
Of velvets, shawls, satins and veils.





The first thing he did was at once to repair
 To the city, and make it well known,
That ten camels laden with merchandise were
At his house, and the owner would find them all there;—
 But nobody came them to own.

Then in open bazaar he sold the whole lot,
 And thus did much money obtain,
But active in mind, although now he had got
Sufficient to live on, yet still could he not
 Unemploy'd and idle remain.

So off to the wood, as his wont used to be,
He went, and one day there he found,
The Ape he had saved from the pit, in a tree,
Who broke the boughs off for him, quicker than he
Could gather them up from the ground.

And when on his donkey he'd managed to place
As much as he carried with ease,
The Ape springing down with a smile on his face,—
A kind of a sweet and a pleasant grimace,—
Skipp'd off and was lost midst the trees.

A day or so after the Serpent he met,
Who did in his mouth to him bring
A stone of three colours, as brilliant as yet
Was e'er by the art of a jeweller set
In the glittering crown of a king,

Which he at the feet of the Woodman let drop,
Then gracefully glided away.
To his hewing down wood this soon put a stop,
For picking it up, to a jeweller's shop,
He ran without further delay,

And begg'd that the man would oblige him, and tell

What virtues by it were possess'd.

The man took the stone and examined it well,

Then answer'd, " Three virtues within the stone dwell,

" As are by the colours express'd.

" The *first* is, that joy without grief is the lot

" Of him who possesseth this stone,

" The *second*, that he shall be rich and shall not

" E'er want, and the *third* of these virtues, I wot,

" Is health, and all sickness unknown.

“ Also if he sells it, and does not receive

“ In full a fair value and true,

“ To him ’twill return and the buyer deceive

“ Himself.” Now the Woodman, well pleased, took his leave,

First paying the man his just due.

Thenceforward he daily grew more and more rich,

And often his wife used to say,

“ In good time you drew the beasts out of the ditch,

“ For now we are happy and wealthy, all which

“ We owe to what happen’d that day.”

His riches were talk'd of by every grade
Of people, and how that they were
Most part by a precious stone's agency made :
This story the Emperor hearing, he bade
Him unto his presence repair.

As soon as arrived, he the Woodman address'd
By saying, " I'm told, my good friend,
" A short time ago you were poor and distress'd,
" But now, by a stone of great virtue, you're bless'd
" With more than you're able to spend.

“ I pray you to sell me this wonderful stone.”—

“ I may not, great Sire,” he replied,

“ For three things I’m sure of, the while its my own,”

Which things to the Emperor then he made known,

Yet still would he not be denied ;

But having determined this stone to procure

He said, “ Of two things you must chuse ;

“ Either sell me this stone, and thereby ensure

“ My favour, or else my displeasure endure

“ For daring my wish to refuse.

“ As you and your wife and your children on pain
“ Of death shall be banish’d the land,
“ If you do not consent.” Now finding it vain
To make any further attempt to detain
The stone, and his orders withstand,

He answer’d him, “ Sire, your command I obey,
“ But first it is right I should name,
“ That long it will not in your treasury stay,
“ But back to my keeping return, less you pay
“ Exactly the worth of the same.”

“ Ten thousand pagodas I'll give you in gold,”

He said, and immediately paid

This sum to the Woodman ; who, now it was sold,

Return'd to his home and his wife, whom he told

How he had to sell it been made.

The money, he thus had been forced to receive,

He went to put carefully by in

His chest, which on opening what should he perceive

But the stone, that he did with the Emperor leave,

Again in its former place lying.

Now he call'd to his wife, who begg'd that he would,
The instant the stone she had seen,
Be off to the palace as fast as he could
For fear that the Emperor, missing it, should
Conceive that he cheated had been.

He went and demanded the Emperor to see,
And said, when he came him before,
“ The stone which this morning I sold, Sire, to thee,
“ I've come back to ask of your kindness to be
“ Permitted to look at once more.”





The Emperor consented, but much was perplext

When he in its place found it not,

Then humbly the Woodman said, “Sire, be not vexed ;

“ My asking this favour was but a pretext,

“ As it in my hand I have got.

“ For less than its value, it could not be bought,

“ I said, when to sell it so press’d ;

“ Hence, Sire, to your presence I have again brought

“ Your gold, for the stone was the first thing that caught

“ My sight, as I open’d my chest.”

The Emperor marvell'd that this should be so,
And said, “ I command you to state
“ Where it was obtain'd, by the faith which you owe.”
He readily answer'd him, “ Sire, you shall know,”—
And did the whole story relate.

He told how the Vizier fell into a pit,
So deep that he could not escape,
That while he did there in despondency sit,
One after another fell down into it,
A Lion, a Serpent, and Ape !

And how the whole party he'd managed to save,
By the voice of the Vizier there led,—
How kindly the beasts in return did behave,
But not so the Vizier, who call'd him a knave,
And beat him till he was near dead.

Such cruel behaviour did greatly provoke,
The Emp'ror, who sent and desired
His Vizier's attendance, to whom he thus spoke,
“ Is it true, that your faith with this woodman you broke
“ And beat, when his meed he required ?”

The Vizier was dumb for he could not disown

 This charge—then the Emperor said,

“ The beasts of the field have their gratitude shown,

“ But, wretch that thou art, by ill-treatment alone

 “ You have this man’s kindness repaid.

“ Your conduct has been so inhuman and base,

 “ That for it I hereby decree,

“ Your wealth shall be settled on him and his race,

“ And he shall be Vizier, while you in his place

 “ Henceforward a woodman shall be.”

From that time his life was in poverty spent,
And when that it drew to an end,
None watch'd by his sick-bed to soothe him intent,
Nor yet when his spirit was fled did lament
His death, for he ne'er had a friend.

The new Vizier won, with his gentle wife, praise,
Which ever was on the increase,
Because they were honest and just in their ways,
And kind to the poor ; so they ended their days,
Respected, beloved, and in peace.

Young friends, by the Woodman's success, you will find

It is good to be "honest and true ;"

The Vizier's disgrace will enforce on each mind,

To be to all folk as obliging and kind,

As you would they should be unto you !

THE END.









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